

The estimated area of Native land still owned by Maoris in the North Island is as follows :—

	Acres.	Acres.
Estimated as at 31st March, 1927		4,153,796
Sales to Crown	17,922	
Sales to individuals	52,817	
		70,739
Total		4,083,057

A considerable portion of this is in European occupation under leases.

GENERAL.

During the period under review further efforts have been made to frame schemes of consolidation, in order that the various scattered interests of the different Maori families may be combined into suitable areas, either to be utilized in a useful manner by the family group or, if not required for that purpose, to become available for general settlement. The Maori has a strong sentimental attachment to the lands derived from his ancestors. This cannot be measured by any money value, and it is not always possible for him to visualize the commercial advantage that the amalgamation of divergent interests will bring. The matter of consolidation of interests is therefore one that cannot be unduly hastened. A certain amount of preparation of the Maori mind for the changed conditions under which the land is to be held must precede. Much useful work has been done in this respect by the members of Parliament representing the Maori race, aided by a special staff which consists for the most part of persons of Maori descent. These are able to understand and appreciate the Maori mind upon the subject. In addition to the consolidation schemes formerly reported as proceeding, large schemes are now being considered by the Courts with regard to Native land in the Waikato-Maniapoto and the Tokerau districts. It is hoped that the fruition of these schemes will in some measure alleviate the position with regard to the collection of rates levied upon Native land. It is too much to expect that it will wholly settle what is admittedly a very serious problem.

Some efforts have been made to place the Maoris in a position to take up pastoral or dairying pursuits and thus utilize their own lands in a profitable manner. As with Europeans, the ultimate success or otherwise depends upon financial resources. Where money has to be borrowed it must be available at a reasonable rate of interest. The ordinary business requisite of safeguarding investments makes the procuration of advances for Maori purposes very uncertain. To meet the financial problem the Maori Land Boards, in conjunction with the Arawa Trust Board and the Tuwharetoa Trust Board, have recently advanced to Natives upon the security of their lands a sum of nearly £100,000. These advances are all made out of the Native-owned moneys. In addition the various Boards have made advances of about £45,000 for farming and dairy pursuits, for the erection of houses, and for the general betterment of the Natives. Spread over the whole Dominion the total sums advanced may not seem large, but they at least indicate a laudable desire on the part of the Maoris to improve their condition and to maintain themselves as respectable members of society.

In addition to promoting the material benefit of the Maori as regards his land, some effort has also been made, through the Maori Purposes Fund, to ameliorate the lot of the Maori race by assisting in the higher education of representative Maoris, and by fitting them by special instruction at the universities, at the Hawkesbury Agricultural and other colleges, at the State Farm, and at hospitals, to become of essential service in improving the status of the Maori people, in assisting in their education, and in ministering to their spiritual and physical needs. As an indication of special care for the Maoris may be noted the fact that steps have been taken during the year which it is hoped will give the Maori race an honourable place in Church government.

While, however, there are some signs of progress and prosperity amongst the Maoris, it must be admitted that there is also some distress, owing to causes no one can control. Most of the requisite relief falls on brother Maoris: some are helped from the all-too-small amount at the disposal of the Native Civil List, whilst others are assisted by the Boards which administer relief in such cases. Some of the Hospital Boards, however, appear to be inclined to discriminate as against the Maori citizen. These are, however, exceptional cases.

The Maoris declared to be Europeans now number sixty-nine, an increase of three.

R. N. JONES, Under-Secretary.

TABLE A.—NATIVE LAND COURTS.

RETURN OF BUSINESS AND FEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1928.

<i>Native Land Court.</i>		<i>Native Appellate Court.</i>	
Number of sittings	124	Number of sittings	6
Number of cases notified	22,126	Number of cases notified	39
Number of cases for which orders were made	7,385	Native Land Court decisions varied	6
Number of cases dismissed	1,739	Native Land Court decisions affirmed	9
Number of cases adjourned <i>sine die</i>	13,876	Native Land Court decision referred back to Native Land Court	1
Number of partitions made	727	Native Land Court decisions annulled	5
Area affected (acres)	183,791	Appeals dismissed or withdrawn	10
Number of investigations of title	8	Appeals adjourned <i>sine die</i>	3
Area affected (acres)	1,310	Application under section 208 ordered	1
Number of succession orders made	6,216	Application under section 208 dismissed	1
Number of other orders made	2,776	Applications under section 208 adjourned <i>sine die</i>	3

Court Fees.

	£	s.	d.
Fees received	5,893	6	2